

# AUGUSTA HISTORICAL BULLETIN



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# AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY—1974-1975

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# AUGUSTA HISTORICAL BULLETIN

Published by the

AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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IN MEMORIAM

MEMBERSHIP LIST

A purpose of the Augusta County Historical Society is to publish *Augusta Historical Bulletin* to be sent without charge to all members. Single issues are available at \$3.00 per copy.

The membership of the society is composed of annual and life members who pay the following dues:

Annual (individual) .....	\$5.00
Annual (family) .....	\$8.00
Annual (sustaining) .....	\$25.00
Life Membership .....	\$100.00
Annual (Institutional) .....	\$10.00
Contributing—Any amount	

## AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1964-1974

The first meeting of the Augusta County Historical Society occurred November 9, 1964 in King Auditorium, Mary Baldwin College, Staunton. Charter memberships totaled 201. On this tenth anniversary of the Society, our membership list stands well over 300 with representation from across the continental United States. This speaks well for the nationwide interest in Augusta County, Virginia, and, particularly, for its historical significance to so many people.

The Society's BULLETIN is to be found in many libraries in the nation. Articles published in the BULLETIN have proved to be of great interest to others than members of the Society; two issues are now completely sold out.

Two projects have kindled great interest in Augusta County history: the Old Homes Project—capturing on film the many homes built before 1860, with a recorded history of each; and the Bicentennial project—the exciting story of the Great Valley of Virginia in the American Revolution, which will come from McClure Press in the fall of 1975.

Our hope is that the second ten years of the Society will be marked by even greater activity and growth than its first decade of existence. The interest shown and contributions made by the members can make this possible.

### PRESIDENTS OF AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1964-1974

Dr. Richard P. Bell, elected 1964  
Harry L. Nash, Jr., elected 1966  
Dr. Marshall M. Brice, elected 1967  
Dr. James Sprunt, elected 1968  
Richard M. Hamrick, Jr., elected 1970  
Joseph B. Yount III, elected 1972  
Mrs. William Bushman, elected 1974

## JACK JEFFERS PRESENTS

### “WINDOWS TO THE BLUE RIDGE”

At the spring 1974 meeting of the Society Jack Jeffers of Lyndhurst, award-winning photographer, presented a sound and color slide documentary centering on the Blue Ridge and the Shenandoah Valley.

Mr. Jeffers' program included a blend of general views and nature close-ups with narrative and artistic studies of people and places. There were intriguing stories and haunting old songs recorded on tape and many facets of a vanishing way of life captured in photographs.

“Windows to the Blue Ridge” was warmly received by an appreciative audience. The Society is truly indebted to Mr. Jeffers for sharing with its members such an evocative and sensitive rendering of western Virginia.



## BEVERLEY MANOR

### A Landmark on the Colonial Frontier

John S. Hale\*

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I am most grateful to our president for his kind words of introduction. As a matter of fact I feel somewhat out of place on this platform. You see, I am a consulting engineer, but before I became a consulting engineer I had to work for a living and I was a land surveyor. I suppose it was then that I became interested in Beverley Manor and the land surveyors of the colonial period. You may know already that land surveyors are or used to be rather unusual types, perhaps not so much admired as they thought they should be.

However, a couple of centuries ago in Virginia surveyors enjoyed considerable status. George Washington, the "Father of Our Country," was a land surveyor in his early years. He surveyed for Lord Fairfax and also did a number of land surveys in this vicinity. Peter Jefferson, father of Thomas Jefferson, was a surveyor of note and the co-author of one of the first really good maps of Virginia. Here in Augusta County Thomas Lewis, son of the pioneer John Lewis, became the first surveyor of Augusta County. In short, surveyors were men of importance in the community for they were indispensable to the acquisition of land titles, and possession of land was the prime reason the settlers came here.

Although there was an abundance of vacant land in the Valley in 1720, conditions were not entirely favorable for opening the frontier at that date. I will try to develop the theme that here in Augusta County, Virginia, in the next three decades—1725 to 1755—we can find the origins of the great westward land movement which played such an important role in the progress of our nation. The establishment and settlement of Beverley Manor was, indeed, a landmark event on the colonial frontier, an historic event which should be more widely known and appropriately commemorated.

Before expanding on this theme, let us take a glance at the background. After all, Europeans had known of North America

for more than two centuries and the English had been in Virginia for more than one hundred years before William Beverley crossed the Blue Ridge. What had been going on in the meantime?

Here we have a map of colonial North America about 1725. As you see, the Spanish had done a great deal of exploration but not very much colonization. They came searching for gold or looking for the fountain of youth. They were brave and venturesome men, but for the most part they left their wives and families behind them and were never great colonizers. They came from a rigidly structured society and no Spaniard came forward to establish a new social order in the new world.

The French, too, were here quite early and they traveled widely as trappers, traders, and missionaries. The waterways were their main highways and they traveled from the Great Lakes to the mouth of the Mississippi. They had settlements in the Quebec area, established frontier posts at the forks of the Ohio, and explored the Ohio River extensively. In fact, the French explorer Celoron left a bronze tablet on the bank of the Ohio in the vicinity of Wheeling, claiming that region for France. But neither did the French have the fever for making a new home and establishing a new social order in the New World. The Spanish and the French exercised some degree of control over a vast area, as shown on our map, but neither power had fostered any development which would leave any lasting colony.

The British were the late arrivals on the continent and they got off to a rather slow start. Although the first permanent settlement was at Jamestown in 1607, followed in the next few decades by settlement in some of the other original thirteen colonies, by 1725 these were still along the seaboard. In Virginia a few bold explorers had entered Augusta County but there were no settlers as yet. The tide of immigration had not begun to lap into the lower reaches of the Shenandoah Valley.

Let us take a closer look at the Virginia situation, as shown on this map. The colony had been established for more than one hundred years; the eight original shires had been replaced by nearly thirty counties. The organization of the counties can give us a rather good idea of the extent of settlement. The red line on the map was about its limit and, as you can see, this was not very far beyond the fall line. The Blue Ridge Mountains were a very real factor limiting expansion. They were a formidable barrier. When we drive across the Blue Ridge today on an inter-

\*Mr. Hale presented this talk at the fall 1973 meeting of the Society.

state highway, we scarcely realize we are crossing the mountains. But consider, if you please, making this trip afoot—with no roads or even trails, with all your worldly goods on your back or on a pack horse, with no Howard Johnson's restaurant to feed you, no Holiday Inn to provide a bed and bath. And what is more, no assurance as to what sort of welcome was awaiting on the other side of the mountains.

In 1716 Governor Alexander Spotswood led a band of bold gentlemen—the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe—across the mountains. From contemporary accounts the party was well fortified with strong spirits to help them on their way. When they reached the Shenandoah River, which they called the Euphrates, they had a real party. As one of the members wrote:

We had a good dinner. After dinner we got the men all together and loaded all their arms and we drunk the King's health in Champagne, and fired a volley; the Prince's health in Burgundy, and fired a volley; and all the rest of the Royal Family in Claret, and a volley. We drunk the Governor's health and fired another volley. We had several sorts of liquors, namely Virginia Red Wine and White Wine, Irish Usquebaugh, Brandy, Shrub, two sorts of Rum, Champagne, Canary, Cherry punch, Cider, Water &c.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Beverley, father of William Beverley, founder of Beverley Manor, was one of the party. It is easy to believe that he brought back many stories of the Valley beyond the mountains and that they made a deep impression on his son William. Robert Brooke, of whom we shall hear more later, was also a member.

Enterprising men of means and influence such as William Beverley soon took positive steps to expedite the settlement of the frontier. It is often said that the Tidewater planters needed settlers west of the mountains as a barrier against the inroads of the French and the Indians and that the land entrepreneurs such as Beverley lined their pockets in the process of peopling the frontier. But this should not diminish our appreciation of their vision or prevent us from recognizing the vital thrust given by them to the settlement of western lands.

By 1728 the stage was set for the drama of westward expansion. The fertile vacant lands beyond the mountains were beckoning. The actors were waiting in the wings, they were crowding on stage—thousands of people hungry for a chance to make a new life in a new world, hungry for land where they might build a new home and a new social order for themselves

and their children. In 1728 all the elements were there for a great historic movement, but for various reasons it was not forthcoming. What was lacking? A catalyst to start the reaction. And then William Beverley came onstage and provided that catalyst—Beverley Manor. I submit that the development and rapid settlement of Beverley Manor did act as a catalytic agent. It sparked and hastened the opening of the frontier; it was the forerunner of many land companies; and it played a major part in the westward movement which surged onward until reaching the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

Who was William Beverley? What and where was Beverley Manor? William Beverley was the third generation of his family in Virginia. His grandfather came to Virginia about 1663 and was prominent politically; his father, Robert Beverley, wrote *The History and Present State of Virginia* and was on Spotswood's expedition of 1716 across the Blue Ridge. William Beverley early developed an interest in the lands west of the mountains. We find an order in Council dated 1728 granting a petition of Beverley and others to take up a tract of land on Cowpasture River. This is rather remarkable for there were no settlements on Cowpasture River known to us at that date. It shows, however, that the region had been explored and there were accepted place names. There is no record that this particular order was ever implemented.

By the year 1730 activity on the frontier began in earnest. The authorities in Williamsburg started actively to issue orders in response to petitions for land grants. Confusion resulted, particularly in the lower Shenandoah Valley where there was a long-protracted dispute between the colonial government and Thomas, Lord Fairfax over the boundary between the colony's lands and the Northern Neck Proprietary. The matter was not finally adjudicated until 1746 and there were many conflicting claims between grantees. I have indicated on the map the final location of the Fairfax line, but for many years there was a zone of uncertain ownership which was avoided to some extent by the colonists. Beverley was involved at an early date in some prospective land developments in the disputed areas, but he knew and admired Lord Fairfax and he was careful to avoid any overlapping claims when he began serious efforts to secure a large land-holding west of the mountains.

It might be well, at this point, to outline briefly the necessary procedures for getting title to lands not already granted. A

royal decree authorized the granting of any unoccupied land to settlers. In practice, entrepreneurs petitioned the Council of the colony for permission to colonize a specified area, which was described in a general way. If the Council granted the petition, an order issued authorizing the petitioner to proceed with a survey of the particular acreage and the bringing in of settlers. Then, a patent for the land was given upon proof that the required number of settlers had been seated on the tract within the designated time. The Council order itself did not vest title to the land; in many cases, petitioners did not comply with the requirements and as a result no patent was ever issued.

Upon receiving the order, a petitioner then proceeded to have the land surveyed by a surveyor licensed by the College of William and Mary and thereafter began to bring in settlers or take count of those already on the land. When he had the necessary number settled and a properly certified survey, he petitioned the Council for a final order. If all the requirements were met, the Council ordered that a patent issue, in the name of the Crown, for the land sought. This vested title in the patentee, who thereafter could convey title to settlers on his land.

As you can see, this was a rather complicated and time consuming procedure. Beverley recognized clearly the need for a middleman, so to speak, and the opportunities inherent in the situation. Writing to a friend, he explained: "the northern men are fond of buying land there [in the Shenandoah Valley], because they can buy it for six or seven pounds per hundred acres cheaper than they can take up land in Pennsylvania and they don't care to go as far as Williamsburg" to get their grants.<sup>2</sup> Beverley, wealthy and well known in Williamsburg, could carry through the formalities which would seem insurmountable to many. Just to get to Williamsburg, several days travel and across the mountains, would have been difficult if not impossible for many of those seeking to settle in the Valley; once there, they would not have known what to do or whom to see. But Beverley, a man of repute, could promise them a good title to land without further worry on their part.

Of course, there were squatters on the land in the early days, but this arose from necessity rather than any desire to cheat. Pioneers moved into the wilderness and took possession without legal title, often because they did not know where or how to get such a title. There was no stigma attached to the term squatter, but the squatters themselves had a somewhat un-

easy feeling and were anxious to get a legal title. How else could they protect themselves from others occupying their land; how could they convey title to anyone if they had no title themselves?

It took a good many years for Beverley to carry out his plans for settlement west of the mountains. After a couple of false starts, on October 28, 1734 he and several associates petitioned the Council and were granted permission to survey and settle a tract of 60,000 acres on the Sherando [the Shenandoah] River. This lay above, that is, southwest of, Jacob Stover's upper tract. Stover's upper tract, granted to him in 1730, was by 1734 fairly well defined and partially settled. The Adam Muller (Miller) property in the vicinity of present-day Elkton came from the Stover patent. The upper limit was about as shown on our map, near the present town of Port Republic.

The order in Council authorizing Beverley and his associates to proceed with the survey was issued in October 1734. It is possible that the survey was started that same year, and it seems likely that when it was started it was not expected that it would be completed immediately. If we refer to the map of the Beverley Manor patent we will see that a rather curious situation developed, one that has interested me for some years. The survey started at the point where Christian's Creek and Long Meadow Run enter Middle River. The surveyors proceeded in the general direction of Port Republic and the end of the first day's work found them on the north bank of Middle River, near the present community of Knightly. Here they set a stone, a rather unusual procedure that that time. This is the stone which was unearthed by William McCue in 1916 and now stands in front of the Augusta County Courthouse in Staunton.

When the survey party resumed work, they did not continue from this point, but went back to the original starting point and started around in the opposite direction. Why did they do this? Well, we will probably never know the real answer, but I find some indication that completion of the survey was deferred for perhaps a year and there appear to have been some substantial changes in the interim. In the first place, licensed surveyors were in great demand at this time and they made up strictly a closed-shop operation. In a letter written about that time to a friend in Williamsburg, Beverley complained about the difficulties in getting a surveyor, for apparently they did not always keep their engagements. I think in this instance he was able only to get the surveyor to promise to start the survey. This in

itself was enough to enable Beverley to stake his claim to the land he wanted, and he put his initial lines in the place from which he feared encroachment, that is, on the side of the nearest settlement.

Who was the surveyor? It appears from the will of Robert Brooke, Jr., which was filed for probate in 1735, that Brooke had agreed to make the survey for Beverley and did in fact start it, but died before its completion. As Brooke was Surveyor for Orange County and evidently certified, it seems probable that he carried out the first day's survey. Tradition has it that Thomas Lewis, later the first Surveyor of Augusta County, was the surveyor. Quite probably he was a member of the survey party and the source for local information, place names, etc., but it seems unlikely that he was the surveyor. He was only seventeen or eighteen years old at the time and I know of no evidence that he was then certified by the College of William and Mary. I am inclined to believe that George Hume was the surveyor who completed the survey since he was granted a large tract of land by Beverley, presumably for his services.

Meanwhile, certain events must have occurred between surveys to persuade Beverley to amend his petition to the Council. At any rate, in April 1735 Council issued a supplemental order responding to a new petition of Beverley's for 100,000 acres on the headwaters of the Sherando. Presumably the survey was resumed subsequent to the issuance of the supplemental order and the surveyors went back to the original starting point and began around in the opposite direction. In retrospect this does not appear too unusual. They were now working against an established closing point; they planned to go to the headwaters of the Shenandoah River and then northwest far enough to cut off the specified amount of land. This map shows the boundaries and, as you can see, this is what they did.

First they ran southeast, crossing South River, to the foot of the Blue Ridge. Then they skirted the foot of the mountains until they reached the present site of Waynesboro. They continued upstream, staying fairly close to the river, and for a short distance they used the river as a boundary of the survey. When they reached the watershed between the Shenandoah and the tributaries of the James River, they turned northwest and followed the divide between the waters. Near the present location of Old Providence Church, the surveyors evidently decided that they had gone far enough west, so they ran a long line on a mag-

netic north bearing to a point near a large spring now called Cochran's Spring but called Black Spring by the surveyors.

They were on the south side of Middle River, very near its headsprings, and they detoured a few hundred yards upriver before crossing it and cornering at the foot of Little North Mountain. They then proceeded back along the foot of the mountain until they reached the vicinity of the present community of Swoope. We must conclude that they had been plotting their courses as they went along, otherwise how could they have made any reckoning of the area they expected to enclose. At any rate they decided that they had encompassed enough land, and they completed their work with the magic phrase, "Thence, North 70 degrees East, Four Thousand one hundred and ninety poles to the Oak and Hickory mentioned at the end of the sixth course, by the river." It seems almost certain that they did not actually survey out this line on the ground but scaled it off of their map.

When they figured the acreage, probably graphically from the plat of their survey, they arrived at a figure of 118,491—not really too far off from the amended petition for 100,000 acres—when one considers that they were surveying blindly through an uncharted wilderness. The final petition, which included the survey description, was written for the acreage figured from the survey, and the order in Council was written accordingly authorizing the governor to issue the patent for 118,491 acres of land. This was done on the sixth day of September 1736.

Another intriguing question comes to light. When the actual boundaries of the survey are plotted on a modern topographic map, it becomes apparent that almost every course is longer on the ground than it was described in the patent. The total acreage enclosed within the well-authenticated boundaries is actually 155,415 acres. How did this come about, was it by design or by accident of careless measurement? I think we can eliminate the latter possibility; the effect of careless measurement will produce, generally speaking, a computed or scaled acreage greater than the true area. Another explanation might be that the surveyors, because of the abundance of vacant land, simply reduced each measured distance before they recorded it in their notes. I think this explanation can also be eliminated. Such an arbitrary falsification of the notes would have been too irregular and too apparent to have gone unnoted.

I think that the true explanation may lie in the rather common practice in England in the previous century of measuring



land with poles of different length, depending upon the nature of the land being surveyed. The standard pole, as fixed by statute, was sixteen and one half feet long, but here are records of the use of a pole twenty feet in length to survey rough mountain land. Perhaps this practice was carried over to the survey of Beverley Manor. This is a point which historians, lawyers, and surveyors can debate endlessly, but it is quite well established that the Beverley Manor survey overran the recorded acreage by a very substantial figure.

During the course of having the survey made, Beverley was quite busy bringing in new settlers and in proving the residence of people already on the tract. It is difficult to determine today exactly who was already settled on the Manor when Beverley had the survey made. Without a doubt John Lewis was already there. Study of the land records indicates that there were probably twenty or thirty families already on the land. Beverley gave deeds to all of these squatters and, of course, included them in meeting his quota of settlers. Apparently within two years he was able to satisfy the proper authorities that he had met the requirements. We find deeds recorded in Orange County beginning in late 1739; one hundred deeds had been recorded there before the court was established at Staunton in 1745. It also appears that there were a number of early settlers or squatters who either failed to get deeds or more likely failed to record them. The compilation of a map of Beverley Manor from the recorded deeds from Beverley clearly illustrates this point. After Beverley had met the legal requirements for settlement, he continued his efforts and within ten years after the organization of Augusta County practically all of Beverley Manor had been conveyed to others.

In September 1736, therefore, we find Beverley the owner of the first large land development in Augusta County and, with few exceptions, the first active land development west of the mountains. The country was still an unexplored wilderness, as aptly illustrated by the following well-authenticated anecdote.

Sometimes in 1737 Benjamin Borden, a native of New Jersey, came into possession of a patent for 92,000 acres of land west of the mountains and south of Beverley Manor. All the preliminary steps had been taken, the survey had been made, and the patent had been issued, but apparently Borden had never visited the property. In fact, Borden did not know exactly where it was when he set out to look for it. Accompanied by a large caravan

of family and followers, he camped one night near the home of John Lewis, perhaps very near where we are meeting tonight. In the course of the evening his camp was visited by John McDowell, who lived a few miles south. During the conversation McDowell asked Borden what business brought him over the mountains. To everyone's amazement Borden said that he was looking for 92,000 acres of land he owned nearby, and he produced his patent. Looking for land corners in all that wilderness was like looking for a needle in a haystack, and Borden did not know where to begin.

Fortunately, however, John McDowell had accompanied the surveyor who had surveyed the Borden grant and he offered to take Borden to the corners in exchange for a deed for one thousand acres of land. The bargain was made, Borden found the land he owned, and McDowell got a deed for the land he occupied.

William Beverley evidently spent some time on his manor tract, although he did not permanently establish himself there. By 1738 there were enough people living west of the mountains to warrant the formation of Augusta and Frederick counties. Augusta was formed in 1738, although not formally organized until 1745. About 1740 James Patton, a ship's captain who had brought many people to Virginia, was persuaded by Beverley to settle in Beverley Manor and very probably acted as Beverley's agent in bringing in new settlers. Patton was active in local government, even when court was held over the mountains in Orange County, and his prominent role in colonial history is well known. I will not dwell on it here. By 1755, scarcely twenty years after the first survey was begun, Beverley Manor was almost completely taken up by settlers who had come to stay and adjacent parts of the county were filling up. Beverley Manor was an established landmark on the advancing frontier.

I submit that this accomplishment, this transition from an uninhabited wilderness to a well-organized and legally occupied community in the span of twenty years, is a tribute not only to the courage and devotion of the settlers but also to the far-sightedness and acumen of William Beverley, the man who made it all possible. His enterprise was indeed the catalytic agent which hastened the reaction between the restless mass of land-hungry people of the Old World and the beckoning, unoccupied lands of the New. Beverley Manor can rightly be regarded as a landmark of the colonial frontier and Beverley's

experiment in land development set the pattern for the formative years that followed.

It seems to me that it would be highly appropriate to establish some permanent marker to commemorate this important step in opening the frontier. I think it would be very fitting that the Augusta County Historical Society take a leading role, since this important event took place in Augusta County. I would like to propose that this Society take steps to place an appropriate marker at the beginning point of the Beverley Manor survey. We should be proud to recognize the importance of Beverley Manor as a great step forward in the westward expansion of this nation.

#### NOTES

1. *The Journal of John Fontaine*, ed. by Edward Porter Alexander (Charlottesville, Va., 1972), 106.
2. As quoted in Richard L. Morton, *Colonial Virginia* (2 vols., Chapel Hill, N. C., 1960), II, 544-545.

## ST. JOHN'S CHURCH 1779 - 1839

Peggy Shomo Joyner

Situated on Route 701 one mile east of Route 252 near Middlebrook is the church known today as St. John's Reformed Church — United Church of Christ. No visible signs of habitation from the peaceful setting of this historic church cause an imaginative mind to reflect on its dim past. Perhaps conjecture is all we shall ever have concerning its earliest history since few authentic sources relating to St. John's prior to the mid-1800's have been uncovered. Some of the later historical accounts contain contradictory information and seem to rely heavily on hearsay.

This writer became interested in St. John's when it was learned that the old register (1779-1872) was housed in the Manuscripts Department of the University of Virginia Library. A personal genealogical interest in forebears who attended St. John's provided a springboard to the rewarding task of transcribing the register and aroused an interest in the backgrounds of all the members, their habits of worship, and their contributions to the community. Most of the members of St. John's were German and Swiss, necessitating the use of the German language in all sermons and in the entries in over half of the old ledger. The last German entries were made in November of 1833 but some sermons were preached in German after that date.

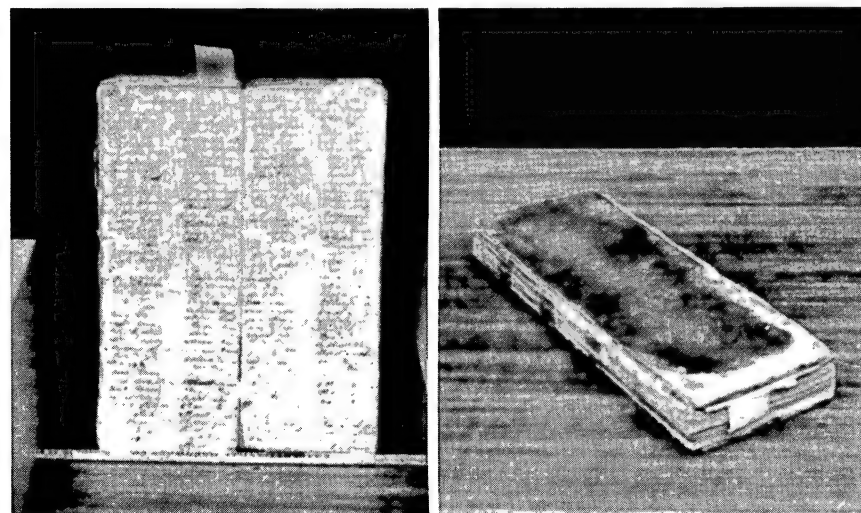
For the transcription of the original register or ledger, staff members of the Manuscripts Department of the University of Virginia Library rendered excellent cooperation and assistance. They photocopied each of the 375 pages so that they might be included in a reproduction of the original and they recommended a German translator, Mrs. Angelika Powell. A native of Germany, Mrs. Powell took her M.S. degree from the Library Science College in Hamburg, Germany. At present she is a staff member in the Slavic Section, Area Collections, at the library.

When the translations were completed the compiler hand-copied each page—approximately 240 pages of German entries plus 135 pages of English records. This was a necessary step because of the difficulty of working with the translations and the various handwritings. The translated pages were typed on a



OLD ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

(Photo by Cameras II)



ORIGINAL RECORD BOOK

(Photos by David L. Bushman)

special typewriter to imitate as closely as possible a published volume. After a memorial page, title page, introduction, and preface, each page of German was followed by the translation for that page, arranged in the same order as the German entries for easy comparison. Typed pages of the English entries were not included since they would have made the reproduction too massive. A seventy-eight page index to all entries was added to unlock the contents of the old ledger.

The first numbered page in the original record was twenty-two. Since the front cover is detached one must assume that the first twenty-one pages have been lost. How curious it makes us to know what might have been recorded there! Inserted in the front of the book were loose unnumbered pages, some appearing to have been written at a later date. Numbers ten through twenty-one were used on the loose pages to make indexing possible. After the transcribed copy was completed it was bound to resemble a large book published in 1779, assuming the ledger may have been purchased about that time.

On Palm Sunday in 1972 the transcribed ledger was presented to the congregation of St. John's by Mr. Paul Hoshour who financially supported the project in memory of his wife, Alleene Rosen Hoshour, a lifelong member of St. John's.

The earliest dates found in the register were in the following entry: "Johan Nicolaus Linck was born November 17, 1748. Anna Margaretha Eisecken, his wife was born 1757 in September. Married August 19th 1779. They had 11 children, 6 sons and five daughters." This page names all eleven children, giving information on each. It may have been entered after 1801, the year the last child was baptized. The entry "Georg Lidick Lives in Tennessee 1779" indicates that the ledger had been started by 1779, but entries are incomplete until regular baptismal entries began in 1792. The latest date recorded was found in the record of Gertrud Elizabeth Rosen, born February 15, 1871, baptised October 29, 1872, the daughter of Jacob and Margaret Rosen.

The register contains hundreds of names. Some of those recorded prior to 1800 were: Kaumann, Miller, Baumgartner, Balmer (Palmer), Linck, Frenger, Kal (Cale), Beck, Retenaur, Heyberger, Kaldespob, Zinck, Sensenbach, Hemb, Weismann, Schwarzel, Ollinger, Schultz, Enteres, Klein, Laumann, Spindler, Doll, Sommer, Hanger, Gabbert, Bardt (Beard), and many others.

The important old ledger has a colorful history. The following account was written by Mr. Klaus Wust, author of *The Virginia Germans*, and it constitutes the preface in the reproduced register. It is used here with Mr. Wust's permission.

Various surveys conducted since 1950 have shown that a number of early records of German-speaking congregations in Virginia have disappeared from congregational archives and seemingly passed into private hands. Several of them are still unavailable to researchers. Some congregations lacked both space and appreciation for such valuable documents. When I began a study of German churches in 1949, the first record book of St. John's was among those reported missing by the respective pastors. On the other hand, this record must have been still available in the years just prior to World War II when the Rev. J. Silor Garrison compiled his *History of the Reformed Church in Virginia 1714-1940*. A plausible reason for its disappearance soon became evident when book and magazine authors showed an interest in the family background of Dwight D. Eisenhower whose ancestors on the maternal side, the Stovers and Links, lived in the area of St. John's parish. Indeed, certain information appearing in publications in 1951 and 1952 indicated the existence of baptismal records for St. John's somewhere in this country. It will never be known who carried the record book away from its rightful place in Augusta County.

During the early part of 1953 I received an unsolicited offer from James Lewis Hook, Antiquarian, 108 South Ventnor Avenue, Ventnor, New Jersey for a "Record Book of the German settlers in the Valley of Virginia." The dealer wanted \$500.00 for this item which he described further as "manuscript records of the German Reformed Church, several thousand entries of family names of those having been baptized, Middlebrook, Augusta Co., Va. Shepherdstown, Mt. Carmel etc., Rev. Meyerhoffer, Rev. Weimaer, Rev. Spindler, Cornelius Yates (Gates) are among the ministers mentioned; a unique record of the names of settlers of the valley; much genealogical information in this record is unobtainable elsewhere." With this description I had no doubt that St. John's records had found their way into the antiquarian market. I notified Mr. John Cook Wyllie, then Curator of Rare Books at the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia. After exactly five years, St. John's old church book finally was bought by the Alderman Library.<sup>1</sup> The acquisitions news-letter of April 1958 described it as "bound manuscript volume, 1765-1868, containing records of baptisms, births, deaths and marriages, including upwards of 50 entries of the Stover family, forebears of Ida Stover Eisenhower." At long last, the book had come home to Virginia and became again available for research.

Interviews with members of the congregation revealed they had their own traditions concerning the disappearance of their

ledger. They said the book was in private hands and has not been in the possession of the church during the years they have been members. They related that their parents told them a man from Staunton borrowed the ledger from the person whose possession it was in, later moved to a northern city, and took the book with him. After his death his widow sold the book. Most important is the fact that the ledger, one of the earliest records of Augusta County's German-speaking settlers, is now in safe keeping and a translated copy is available for research.<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the ledger contains primarily baptisms with birth dates, communicant lists, some deaths, lists of confirmants, but no marriage records. No Minister's Returns for St. John's for marriages performed have been found in the courthouse until a later date. While the ledger is filled with excellent genealogical material, there is a frustrating lack of enlightening historical data.

It is not known when St. John's was given a name. In 1785 and 1786 in a court proceeding the church was only referred to as a "society" and a "congregation," inferring that a group was meeting at that time.<sup>3</sup> As early as 1809 we find the name St. John's in an old register owned by the Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and entitled "The Register of the Church Elders, Deacons, and Lay Delegates in Virginia" in 1809. It contains the following extract, "Augusta County, St. John's Church, near Middlebrook — Officers Friederich Henger, Jacob Gebert, Peter Egel, and George Frenckerer."<sup>4</sup> For many years this church was called Union Meeting House, some of the present members recalling that grandparents referred to the church by both names, St. John's and Union Meeting (House).

The sketchy early history of Augusta County's oldest German-speaking congregation consists of too few bona fide pieces fitted into its historical puzzle. Few written facts have been found concerning the German Reformed congregation who claim 1780 as their date of formation. It can be determined from the register that this date might be changed to 1779 unless an earlier date can be found. The Lutherans who shared the same facility, the adjoining graveyard, and often the same ministers claim 1785 as their formation date. A brief study of the first Augusta County land purchases by early members of St. John's revealed that many arrived in the 1760's and 1770's. These people must have held worship services long before the organization dates claimed by the two congregations. Reformed and Lutheran min-



isters were quite scarce and churches did not often organize unless they could obtain the leadership of a pastor. The Germans are said to have held services in homes and other suitable places before they built churches.

The history of an organization cannot be separated from the individuals who labored to make it a success. Who were those people who first organized the Germans in the area of St. John's? Perhaps we shall never know but some names seem to appear more than others. Some of those will be given here. "Family registers" in the front of the ledger were entered for Johannes Kaumann, Johan Nicolaus Linck, Peter Frenger, and Georg Lidick. John Georg Miller, Samuel Runckle, and Jacob Sheets may have played major roles. Georg Adam Brecht (Bright), Jacob Kephart (Gabbert), Christian Zimmerman, Philip Olinger, Philip Doll, Jacob Fulweider, Jacob Balmer, Peter Kahl, Stephen Beck, Augustine Ehrgenbrecht, Philip Greaver, and Jacob Grass, among others mentioned, were in the area before 1780. Frederick Hanger was a trustee at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Woodstock in 1764. On an altar cloth at Emmanuel, dated 1767, were the names Friederich and Eva Margaretha Hanger. Within a few years Frederick's name appeared in the records at Frieden's in Rockingham County and then at St. John's where he was a faithful member until his death. There is little question that Frederick Hanger at least assisted in assembling the Lutherans, if not all the Germans into a unified group. Other Germans soon arrived to aid and strengthen the congregation. A few familiar names are Christ, Imboten, Engleman, Behler, Klemmer, Grimm, and Haun.

The land on which St. John's is located has been traced to the ownership of William Campbell and wife, Margaret. On May 10, 1778 the Campbells sold 200 acres to John Cowman (Kaumann) who was one of the first persons mentioned in the St. John's register.<sup>5</sup> On May 18, 1784 John Cowman sold eight and a half acres for seventeen pounds

for a church or Presbyterian meeting house or schoolhouse and the congregation thereto belonging...being part of the plantation where said John Cowman now lives...not to be disposed of to any person but for the use of the meeting house and the congregation.<sup>6</sup>

The word "Presbyterian" caused misgivings. To prove that St. John's German Reformed Church was the "Presbyterian meet-

ing house" referred to in the deed, Mr. William Crawford, retired Surveyor of Augusta County, was consulted. After extensive research he was able to verify the survey and the deeds. "Dutch Presbyterian" was a term sometimes applied to the Reformed Church,<sup>7</sup> so that the Cowman deed holds a clue to which denomination actually purchased the land.<sup>8</sup>

In 1793 John Cowman sold his plantation to Christian Bosserman "except eight acres formerly sold for the use of a meeting house by said Cowman."<sup>9</sup> This land was willed to Jacob Bosserman, Christian's eldest son.<sup>10</sup> On December 9, 1837 Jacob and Eve Bosserman granted to John Ott and John Christ, Jr., trustees for the congregation of St. John's and their successors, a tract of land on which the church of St. John's was built, together with the graveyard, containing five acres. The deed recited that Bosserman—"doth grant and lease for 99 years . . . Bosserman reserves that in case the German Reformed Congregation should become extinct the said lott of ground is to return to the original tract from which it was taken."<sup>11</sup>

It is curious that the congregation paid seventeen pounds for eight and a half acres in 1784 and was then granted a lease for five of the same acres for ninety-nine years in 1837. The Lutherans moved to Mt. Tabor in 1839. Could the lease have been a protective measure to insure the Reformed of keeping the property or what other circumstance might have provoked such an action? The reduction of acreage from eight and a half acres to five acres is also interesting.

The first mention of a structure being built on the property was found in File 447 in the Augusta County Clerk's Office. Two sets of papers were included in this file, entitled John George Miller vs. Samuel Runkle — Slander and John George Miller vs. Jacob Sheets — Slander. Proceedings began in November Court 1791 and were continued at four successive court terms until a jury's verdict was issued at May Court, 1793. Verdict: "Each party to pay their own costs."

Samuel Runkle and Jacob Sheets accused John George Miller of being a "roage" and a cheat. To maintain his good name and reputation George Miller brought slander suits against the two. In their defense, Runkle and Sheets had the court of Augusta County order that depositions be taken in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. These depositions and sundry other papers in the file contain some of the earliest documented history of St. John's that this researcher has found. While the name St. John's

was not mentioned, all Augusta County parties involved were members of the church as shown by the ledger. Pertinent information from these papers follows.

In a deposition of Sebastian Getz dated October 20, 1792 he

doth say that about seeding time in 1786 John George Miller came to his house in Marlborough Township, Montgomery Co. (Pa.) and presented a Brief for raising a collection for building a church in Virginia near where Miller lived and said the congregation was weak and the minister lived in his house.

Getz "perused the Brief and well remembered that it was subscribed by some persons under the title of Elders or other Members of said congregation." Getz further stated

John George Miller then went from his house and after some time returned when he seemed much dissatisfied and informed him that he called on the Rev. parson Helmuth in Philadelphia and he only gave him one Spanish Dollar toward Building their Church.... [Getz] was well acquainted with said John George Miller in Germany as they were both from the same village and came over sea to this country together....

Frederick Dull, an elder in the Reformed Church in Whitpain Township (Boehm's) at the time the Rev. Mr. Winkhouse was minister, said: "Rev. Winkhouse published after services that a collection was to be raised for erecting a church in Virginia about Staunton...." Frederick Dull contributed as did Boehm's congregation.

Casper Slaughter swore that he "was Clerk of the Church (Boehm's) and remembers a collection was raised on application of a stranger from Virginia.... Mr. Winkhouse Exorted the members contribute which was done.... but don't know to what amount."

George Fleiger [Kreiger?], elder of Boehm's, made similar statements as the other deponents.

John William Miller swore that in the years 1785-86 in September of each year John George Miller was at his house in Whitpain for several weeks and that the "deponent lent him a horse to go to the Rev. Mr. Muhlenberg at a place called the Trap." When he returned he was disappointed because the Rev. Muhlenberg gave him no money. George Miller informed William Miller "they went about building a House of Worship about 10 or 12 miles from Staunton and that deponent was well

acquainted with John George Miller in Germany and that they came over sea together." The last four depositions were dated May 13, 1792 and signed by all four deponents.

In behalf of Samuel Runkle subpoenas were served on Jacob Gabbart, Jacob Teaford, Spindle the minister, and John Sheets. Subpoenaed in behalf of George Miller were Adolph Spindle, John Cowman, Henry Verner, and Olerich Fulwiller.

From the suit against Jacob Sheets some notes should be added. The deposition of the

Rev. John Harmon Winkhouse being now met at the house of Henry Smith at the sign of the Spread Eagle in the City of Philadelphia... that he was requested by the elders and others of the congregation of Boehm's Church in Whitpain Township at the request of a certain John George Miller... to raise a collection for erecting a house of Worship in Virginia in the County of Augusta which said request was made immediately after divine Services.... About a twelve month after, Frederick Dull told him he had requested Samuel Runkle to wether the said John George Miller had applied the money collected by them to the uses for which it was given....

Other depositions for Jacob Sheets were taken from Dull, Schlater, Fleiger, and William Miller, with the following one added. The deposition of John Shoub said he was in church when Rev. Winkhouse asked for contributions; that the said Miller lived not far from him in Pennsylvania (presumably at a former time); and that Miller was in church at the time and that a collection was raised and paid to him.<sup>12</sup>

Samuel Runkle and his wife sponsored a baptism in 1772 at Boehm's which indicates they lived in that area before settling in Augusta County.<sup>13</sup> A history of Boehm's German Reformed Church, written in 1890, failed to mention anything about donations to a church in Augusta County during the 1785 period.

From these documents we learn that a church was "being built" in 1785 and 1786, according to George Miller. A "weak" congregation was in existence with elected elders and a minister. The brief carried by George Miller was signed by Elders or members of the congregation and they obviously felt the need to solicit financial aid from the older and more established churches in Pennsylvania. It would have been enlightening and perhaps more accurate if the testimony of each of the three principals, Runkle, Sheets, and Miller had been included in the file.

Page thirteen of the ledger lists sixty-six men under the title, "Collect for improvement of the Church called Saint John's in Augusta County, 1812." Another entry in the ledger dated June 7, 1812 and bearing title, "Builder's Election" lists eight men who were nominated: Martin Behler, Conrad Heuberger, Georg Klemer, Georg Fulweider, Daniel Holl, Christian Bardt, Philib Engleman, and Jacob Balmer. Elected were: Daniel Holl and Phillip Engleman. Plans were being made to improve the existing structure, or were they rebuilding?

A seemingly accurate story related by a St. John's member tells that an early church was built of walnut logs. When it was dismantled, the logs were used to build a springhouse near the church at the present Wayne Shultz home. The springhouse later burned.

In 1850 a brick church was constructed 150 feet northeast of the old building and was used until the church in use today replaced it in 1913.<sup>14</sup> The Rev. John H. Crawford who served the Reformed congregation between 1858 and 1864 was buried where the altar of the old log church stood which would place its location in the present day cemetery.

The Lutheran Evangelical Synod of Virginia met at St. John's in 1832. Following are some extracts of the minutes.

St. John's Church, Augusta County, Virginia  
October 20, 1832

Some of the brethren, having arrived in the neighborhood on Friday evening, on Saturday at 11:00 o'clock a.m., there was preaching preparatory to the Lord's Supper. Rev. Nicholas Schumacher delivered a German discourse in the church from Acts 24:25, and at the same time, Rev. W. Scull preached a sermon in the English language at a stand in an adjoining grove . . .

After the names of the communicants were registered, the congregation resorted to where Rev. Thomas Miller preached an English sermon . . .

Sunday morning, 9:00 o'clock  
October 21, 1832

At 11:00 a.m. Brother N. Schumucker preached a German sermon in the church . . . and Rev. John P. Cline, at the stand, in the English language . . .

The weather being very pleasant an immense number of persons assembled; and as the temple of their fathers was now too small,

the Lord's Supper was administered in the grove, to upwards of two hundred persons. During all the exercises the greatest order prevailed, and from the solemnity manifested, it is to be hoped that many salutary and lasting impressions were made. After a short intermission, Brother Miller preached an English sermon . . .

Monday, 9:00 o'clock, Oct. 22

As the weather was inclement on Monday morning, the Presbyterian (Bethel) church, which had been kindly offered by that denomination, was occupied by the Synod — the Lutheran church being too small to contain the persons who had assembled.<sup>15</sup>

With all known sources giving different names, the ministers of St. John's Reformed congregation cannot definitely be identified. The register contains no signatures during that period but the following names are mentioned as performing baptisms: Reverends Spindler, Weimear, Faber, Grininger, and Braun. All of these were listed before 1795 and appeared to be entered by individuals other than the ministers themselves. Some of these baptisms may have been performed elsewhere. Reverend Michael Meyerhoffer was named in the register as early as 1827. Reverend John Brown, Reformed minister at Frieden's Reformed Church in Rockingham County, probably preached on an irregular basis. The resident minister was the Reverend Adolph Spindler who was probably the minister living in the home of George Miller in 1785 or 1786 since it is known that he was in the area at that time.

The surname Spindler was found spelled several ways and it seems likely from a few small clues that are being investigated that the name was originally spelled Spindler, the last letter being dropped gradually after 1800. Reverend Mr. Spindler was referred to as Adolph and Adam in court records which obviously alluded to him.

In 1786 the Reverend Paul Henkel discovered Adolph Spindler at Frederick Hanger's house. They travelled to Tennessee and North Carolina together that year when Reverend Henkel recorded the fact that Spindler could speak little English.<sup>16</sup> Reverend Spindler has been given credit for founding Coiner's Church which became known as Spindle's Meeting House and the original Lutheran church in Staunton. "Evidence points to Paul Henkel as probable organizer of the Lutheran congregation at St. John's Church."<sup>17</sup>

Genealogical approaches to the origin of Reverend Spindler have proved unsuccessful but some interest has been generated

by locating several descendants. Information is still being sought. This dedicated minister who served for forty years or longer should have his background discovered and recorded. Adolph Spindler was born about 1761. In 1787 he married Catharine Engleman.<sup>18</sup> In 1791 he married Elizabeth Cowman,<sup>19</sup> daughter of John Cowman, from whom the St. John's land was purchased in 1784. Adolph Spindler bought a 210-acre tract near Sugar Loaf from Herman Lovingood in 1789.<sup>20</sup> It is said that Spindler lived in a log house on Spindler's Hill (at Sugar Loaf) where he conducted a school in German and English.

In 1787 Reverend Spindler was licensed by the Augusta County Court to perform marriages. In the same year the register records the first baptism performed by him. He was licensed by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in 1796 but it was not until 1803 that he was ordained a Lutheran minister by that group in Baltimore, Maryland. Reverend Spindler and Elizabeth had four children who are recorded in the register and in his estate settlement: Phillip, David, Elizabeth Brooks, and John. Two names, Benjamin and Magdalin Spindler, appeared in the register but no evidence of identity has been located. When Rev. Spindler died in 1826 he was buried in the cemetery at St. John's: his tombstone is still intact. It reads

In Memory of  
Rev. Adolph Spindle  
who departed this life the 6 of  
Oct. A.D. 1826 aged about 65 years. He  
served about 40 years as a faithful  
minister of the Gospel at St. John's Church.

When the Lutherans who preferred their worship services in the English language left St. John's in 1839 to move to Mt. Tabor, Elizabeth Cowman Spindler went with them.<sup>21</sup> She died in 1850 of old age (82) and is buried at Mt. Tabor.<sup>22</sup>

While Rev. Adolph Spindler was a Lutheran minister, he must have served all the German people, performing their marriage and baptismal ceremonies, burying their dead, conducting their worship services, and administering the sacraments. The inscriptions on his tombstone tells us he was "faithful minister of the Gospel at St. John's Church." It does not say he was the minister of the Lutherans at St. John's Church. The harmony that is reported to have prevailed between the two groups might

easily have been attributed to this man who lived and served in their midst, holding the spiritual community together as something permanent.

From a weak beginning, the German Reformed and the Lutherans overcame all obstacles to become two strong and active churches today — St. John's and Mt. Tabor.

More detailed data is sought concerning St. John's Church, its ministers, and its members. Will anyone who is willing to share information please contact me at this address? Mrs. D. M. Joyner, 5008 Dogwood Trail, Portsmouth, Va. 23703.

My sincere thanks for special assistance go to the following: Katherine G. Bushman, Dr. William E. Eisenberg, Raymond Palmer, Klaus Wust, William Crawford, the Rev. J. Lester Link, Mrs. Cecil Bowman, Mrs. Letcher Clemmer, David Bushman, Dr. Herbert B. Anstaett, and Mr. Edmund Berkeley, Curator of the Manuscripts Department at the University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

## NOTES

1. The University of Virginia Library paid \$200 for the St. John's ledger.
2. The transcribed ledger, stored in a vault, may be used by appointment and in the presence of a designated church member.
3. Augusta County Court Records, File 447.
4. Mt. Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church—1839-1939, p. 7.
5. Augusta County Court Records, Deed Book No. 22, p. 291.
6. Ibid., Deed Book No. 24, p. 222.
7. Klaus Wust, *The Virginia Germans* (Charlottesville, Va., 1969), p. 130.
8. Mrs. Letcher Clemmer recalls that her father-in-law, John L. Clemmer, (1850-1940) often spoke with absolute knowledge and assurance that the Reformed were the original and the only owners of the St. John's property.
9. Augusta County Court Records, Deed Book No. 28, p. 84.
10. Ibid., Will Book No. 16, p. 181.
11. Ibid., Deed Book No. 61, p. 112.
12. Augusta County Court Records, file 447.

13. Register of Boehm's German Reformed Church, Philip Schaff Library, Lancaster Theological Seminary (microfilm).
14. Historical and Memorial Association, A Brief History of St. John's Reformed Church, 1926, pp. 2-3.
15. Mt. Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1839-1939, p. 7.
16. William E. Eisenberg, *The Lutheran Church in Virginia 1717-1962* (1967), p. 413.
17. Ibid.
18. Augusta County Court Records, Marriage Bonds
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., Deed Book No. 26, p. 383.
21. William E. Eisenberg, *The Lutheran Church in Virginia 1717-1962* (1967), p. 425.
22. Augusta County Court Records, Census of 1850, Mortality Table.

## JOHN COLTER: DISCOVERER OF YELLOWSTONE

Carroll Lisle

In Jackson, Wyoming, stands a small memorial to a native Augusta Countian whose services to the country are unsung and largely unknown even in the region of his birth. John Colter was the discoverer and explorer of the wondrous land now part of the Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks region.

His family remembered him proudly as one of the men who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their famous expedition into the unknown country that lay in and beyond the Louisiana Purchase.<sup>1</sup> Because the significance of his lone explorations in what is now Wyoming went unnoticed for generations, it is not surprising that the family remembered only his being part of the famed expedition.

To be a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition was no mean achievement. We can assume that as in our own times Thor Heyerdahl had to be selective in choosing crews for his expeditions on the *Ra* and *Kon-Tiki*, so did the leaders of the 1804 expedition into the newly acquired wilderness. To have been one of the selected few speaks well for Colter's prowess; later, his ability spoke for itself so that entries in the *Journal* regarding Colter were in praise.

Colter was born in Augusta County in about 1775. Accounts vary as to his parentage, but he was a great-grandson of Micajah Coalter, the founder of the family in Virginia.<sup>2</sup> From earliest times the family had land holdings in the region of Stuarts Draft.

Although he may have had little formal education, at a time when few other backwoodsmen were literate, John Colter could read. The inventory of his estate after his death listed "three histories."<sup>3</sup> But it was not his reading ability that procured him his position with Lewis and Clark. There is the remote possibility that he and his contemporary, Merriwether Lewis, knew each other since a mere thirty miles and a mountain divided the men's domains. But this is unlikely. There is no mention in the *Journals* that the men knew each other previously. It was his ability as a woodsman that attracted attention.



Here in Augusta County the young Colter learned the rudiments of hunting and trapping. His marksmanship was exceptional. Later, as a member of the famed expedition he would be promoted from a lowly private to hunter, a coveted position. He learned to have a keen ear and trained eye, assets to the outdoorsman. He learned to swim and to run swiftly, skills which later saved his life.

By 1800 he had emigrated to Kentucky. He was not alone. The Census of 1800 indicates eight Coulter (spelled variously) families settled in that state, all within a hundred miles of each other. A John Coulter, Jr. and a John Coulter, Sr. had settled in Fayette County, Kentucky, the county seat of which is Lexington. The younger may have been John Colter, the explorer. A David Coulter settled in Mason County, and it was from Maysville, Mason County, a little town located on the Ohio River, that John Colter enlisted with Lewis in October 1803 for \$5 per month.<sup>4</sup> A fellow trapper, who knew Colter in 1810, indicated that he was about 5' 10" in height, of a sturdy frame, with a "pleasing face of the Daniel Boone stamp."<sup>5</sup> Colter's reliability and good humor gained him the respect of his commanders. He was often selected when one or two men were needed for important special duty.<sup>6</sup>

Captain Clark recognized Colter's ability to memorize topography, as was shown by two incidents. On the strength of Colter's own statements regarding his explorations, Captain Clark added information to his map of the locale. And in 1811 when an English naturalist, Bradbury, was to join the Astorians, Clark referred him to Colter, who had not long returned from the mountains, as a person who could guide Bradbury to a natural curiosity on the Missouri River that Colter had not seen for six years.<sup>7</sup>

When the Lewis and Clark Expedition was homeward-bound but still in what is now North Dakota, John Colter, at the behest of two newly arrived Illinois beaver trappers, Hancock and Dickson, asked permission to leave the expedition to return to the wilderness with the two trappers. The request was unprecedented and somewhat amazing considering that Colter was turning his back on civilization when he had been nearly two and a half years in the wilderness. Clark recorded in the *Journal*:

"...his [Colter's] services could be dispensed with from this down and we were disposed to be of service to any of our party who had performed their duty as well as Colter had done, we agreed to allow him the privilege providing no one of the party

would ask or expect a similar permission to which they all agreed that and they wished Colter every success and that as we did not wish any of them to Separate untill we Should arrive at St. Louis they would not apply or expect it.... we gave Jo Colter Some Small articles which we did not want and some powder and lead. The party also gave him several articles which will be useful to him on his expedition."<sup>8</sup>

The three trappers remained together from their departure in mid-August 1806 until early spring. Traveling alone in his canoe toward St. Louis, Colter met with another party of trappers led by Manuel Lisa near the mouth of the Platte. Learning that Colter had just left the very area where they intended to go, Lisa urged Colter to join with his party. Colter did. This decision caused Colter to remain in the wilderness for another three years and to be the first white man to see the northwestern corner of Wyoming.

Because of mishaps and delays, the group did not reach the Big Horn River via the Yellowstone River until late November 1807. This lost them the fall trapping season. While a fort and trading post were being built, Lisa gave Colter the task of informing Indians of the new business and requesting of them their furs for trade. As winter approached, Colter set off on a lone journey that took him into territory unknown to him. His exact route is a matter of conjecture, but from information he gave Captain Clark, his route of 1807-1808 was added to a map compiled by Samuel Lewis of Philadelphia and published in Nicholas Biddle's history of the expedition in 1814.<sup>9</sup> The topography is somewhat confused and inaccurate on the map. But discovery of a Colter-made blaze and a rock carving lend credence to the theory that Colter passed through Jackson Hole, over the Tetons to Teton Basin, Idaho, and then made a more northerly trek through parts of Yellowstone.<sup>10</sup>

Colter determined the source of the Yellowstone River, discovered Yellowstone Lake, and explored the Big Horn and other rivers. He used and described several important mountain passes, one of which has been identified as Togwotee Pass. That pass solicited from Colter a remark to Henry M. Brackenridge, which Brackenridge quoted in the *Louisiana Gazette* for April 18, 1811, to the effect that Colter said a loaded wagon would find no obstruction in passing and with less difficulty than the Alleghenies.<sup>11</sup> Although information regarding the ease in mountain crossing was available early, the information was very late being applied.

Colter undoubtedly used Indian trails and learned routes from tribesmen, amongst whom he was spreading the news of a market for their furs. Colter was aware of the canyon of the Yellowstone, but quite likely he did not see the falls. He did see, however, "Hot Spring Brimstone" as it is indicated on the map, which, because of its location near the lower end of the Yellowstone Canyon on the map, has been identified as the Mammoth Hot Springs. Undoubtedly Colter passed numerous other boiling springs, but there is no indication that he saw any of the famous geysers of the Yellowstone Park.

By the time Colter returned to the fort in the spring of 1808, the Indians were already trading furs. Through the summer he continued to explore the country lying west of the fort. He aroused the enmity of the fierce Blackfeet by assisting their enemies the Crows and the Flatheads in a fray at the Three Forks of the Missouri. Before the summer was over the Blackfeet captured Colter and his trapping companion, Potts in the same area as the battle. Potts was killed but Colter made an escape that verges on the incredible.

This escape did not daunt Colter. He remained in the mountains another year. The Fur Company underwent a year of hardships that included fomentings by malcontents, desertions, cold and privation, lost furs, and encounters with unfriendly Indians in the same Blackfoot area where twice before Colter had had narrow escapes. Colter decided to leave. After an Indian ambush in April 1810 that killed five men, John Colter and others returned to civilization.

He arrived in St. Louis in May 1810. He married and settled at Charette, not far from Dundee, Missouri. By an act of Congress in 1807, Colter was given a warrant of 320 acres for his part in the Lewis and Clark Expedition.<sup>12</sup> His life in Missouri and civilization is undocumented except for an 1811 encounter with the Astorians on their way west. Not four years after his return from the wilderness John Colter was dead.

#### NOTES

1. Stallo Vinton, *John Colter, Discoverer of Yellowstone* (New York, 1926), 28.
2. Vinton states Colter's father's name was John, son of Michael, but in an article in the *Staunton News Leader* for May 10, 1959, the writer, Gerald O. Haffner, Ph.D., claims that his father was Joseph and mother, Ellen Shields Colter.

3. Vinton, *John Colter*, 29.
4. *Ibid.*, 31.
5. David Saylor, *Jackson Hole, Wyoming* (Norman, Okla., 1970), 9.
6. Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The Yellowstone National Park*, ed. Richard A. Bartlett (Norman, Okla., 1964), p. 21.
7. *Ibid.*, 21.
8. Saylor, *Jackson Hole*, 9-16.
9. *Ibid.*, 26.
10. "Hole" means valley.
11. Saylor, *Jackson Hole*, 27.
12. Vinton, *John Colter*, 104-105

## OLD HOMES OF AUGUSTA COUNTY

### THE CRAWFORD PLACE

The Home of Mr. and Mrs. Rodney A. Lawson

Gladys B. Clem

Only a pile of rubble near the Churchville-Buffalo Gap road (Route 42) marks the site of what was once the pioneer cabin of Alexander and Mary (McPheeters) Crawford, victims of this area's last Indian massacre. They were killed, it is said, sometime in the summer of 1764.<sup>1</sup>

Because of rumors of an impending Indian raid the settlers were "fortin' in." The Crawford family—there were eleven children—are said to have taken refuge, with others of the vicinity, in the stone dwelling later known as the "old Keller place" or the "Fort." It was located some three miles distant from the Crawford home, near what was known as the Big Spring. Unfortunately, this old landmark was torn down some years ago and its stone used in road construction.<sup>2</sup>

According to tradition, the Crawfords had returned to their home to secure fresh vegetables from the garden for those shut in the fort. The two older sons, William and John, had gone up on the mountain to salt horses hidden there from the Indians. The savages appeared suddenly, as was their custom, killing Alexander and Mary Crawford and setting fire to their cabin. The two boys, from their vantage point, saw the flames and feared the worst. When they returned they found their father's mutilated body amid the smoking ruins. Their mother had apparently been overtaken and tomahawked outside. Their broken remains were laid to rest in the Glebe cemetery, where a suitable stone marks their graves.

It is thought the same party of Indians continued on down to Middle River where they attacked the Trimble family, killing John Trimble. But they paid dearly for their savagery, for six of the attacking party were killed by pursuing settlers.

It fell to the lot of William Crawford, one of the older sons, to keep the family together after their parents' deaths. With this in mind, he built a roomy and substantial cabin midway between



THE CRAWFORD PLACE

(Photo by Jim McCool)





RUBBLE MARKING FIRST CABIN SITE

(Photo by Jim McCool)



IRON PLAQUE

(Photo by Jim McCool)

the burned-out home and the present dwelling. It was torn down many years ago; an old cast iron marker dated 1769 is believed to have designated this building. Another discovery made during later restoration was of a handmade brick bearing the date 1750, but unfortunately the significance of this is lost.

In 1765 William Crawford married Rachel Sayers. It was their grandson William who built the three-room house of rock construction, sometime in the early 1800's, that was to become the nucleus of the present dwelling. The site the second William selected was a gentle knoll at the eastern base of North Mountain, overlooking a wide and level meadow. The meadow provided not only stone building material for the new house but more than enough for a long stone wall about the farm. Several generations of Crawford youths were kept busy picking up rocks, a back-breaking chore even recalled by members of the present-day family, the last to reside there.

Narrow double doors with graduating panels provide the entrance to this section of the house. A steep stairway—the slender spindles of its balustrade reminiscent of an earlier day—was added for a later second story. In 1867 additional architectural changes were made resulting in the massive structure that exists today.

The second story now consists of a main hall, living room, dining room, kitchen, and bath—fifteen rooms in all as the result of modern restoration. The main stairway, located in this section of the house, winds gracefully up to the third floor with its several bedrooms and library. An interesting feature of this floor is that one wall is covered with handmade shingles, indicating that it was once an exterior wall. Wide dormer windows make these top-floor rooms airy and full of sunshine and provide a magnificent view of the countryside.

A wide portico both on the first- and second-story levels encompasses two sides of the house. One section on the first floor serves a breakfast area and a plant room and elsewhere space is set aside for an indoor fountain. Ceilings are high, a characteristic of the homes of this period, and the windows are deeply embrasured in the fifteen-inch-thick walls. The seven fireplaces are unusually large and deep with well proportioned mantels, simple but excellent in design. The floors are mostly of random-width boards, many hand pegged.

Stories as conflicting as they are numerous are told of this old home, so steeped in local history.

Seven generations of the Crawford family lived there before their tenure ended. The Laymann and Montelle families were the next owners, and the Montelles sold the property to Mr. and Mrs. John S. Cowl who were in possession some forty years. Thereafter, the late Z. A. Foster and Mr. and Mrs. F. S. Sorrell respectively held possession of the old Crawford place. Mr. and Mrs. Rodney A. Lawson are the present owners; they are continuing with improvement and restoration of the property.

#### EPILOGUE

During the ownership of Mr. and Mrs. Cowl they were much surprised to receive a visit by a descendant of the Indian chief killed during the massacre. Accompanied by two older relatives, the young man was returning to his home in the west after graduation from Harvard University. He stopped in Virginia to see the place where his ancestor had fallen.

To the Cows' amazement he described in detail numerous facts concerning the murder of the Crawfords and even knew about the two boys who had gone up the mountain to salt the horses. The Indians seemed to have complete knowledge of the geographical aspects of the pioneer farm and they told how this information had been passed from father to son throughout ensuing generations. All of this shows that history frequently comes full circle.

#### NOTES

1. Sources for this article include Joseph A. Waddell, *Annals of Augusta County, Virginia, From 1726 to 1871*. 2nd ed. Staunton, Va., 1902; and family papers in the possession of the Misses Annie Lee, Estelle, and Frances Crawford.
2. The following item from the *Staunton Spectator*, May 2, 1876, relates to this old fort: Frederick Keller, Sr. bought and settled on the estate formerly belonging to James Sayer, on Middle River, said to have been built by Jonathan Cunningham, between Westview and Churchville, known as the 'old fort.' The building on this farm is a crude structure of stone, evidently put up in great haste and was used as a fort to protect the white citizens against the ravages and massacres of the Indians that inhabited the country at that time.

The windows or port holes, in the original walls are not much larger than is necessary for a man to creep through. The walls are more than two feet thick. There is a chimney, or stack, in the center of the house which has a fireplace on one side of it 10-12 feet wide and about 6 feet high. The other side has a fireplace 6 feet wide and 4 feet high. In the northeast end of this building there is a stone with the following inscription on it: James Sayers, 1765.

Signed: W. J. K.

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